

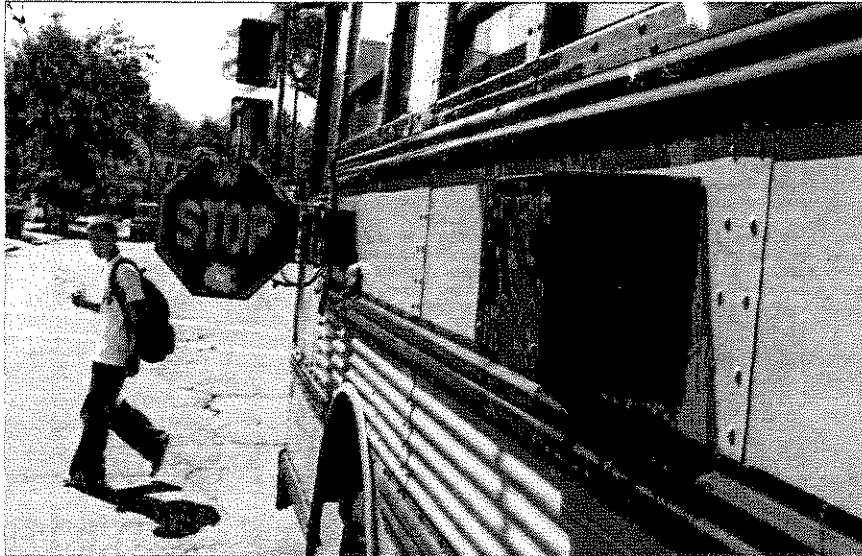
RAIN ARRIVES
Cloudy this morning,
with rain this afternoon
and evening.
Forecast, B8

The Providence Journal

WEDNESDAY
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Video cameras on some Providence and Johnston school buses are housed in black boxes attached to the driver's side, recording vehicles that illegally pass a stopped bus with its flashing lights on and stop sign displayed.

Some hard numbers about school bus safety

11

Number of citations issued in Providence and Johnston to motorists for illegally passing a stopped school bus before cameras are installed.

699

Number of citations issued in Providence and Johnston after cameras are installed.

BY RICHARD C. DUJARDIN
JOURNAL STAFF WRITER

Until recently, it was all but impossible to catch a driver who put children at risk by passing a stopped school bus. In 2007, police across Rhode Island issued just 128 citations to drivers for passing stopped buses; 97 were found guilty.

But last year, the General Assembly passed a law letting school systems hire a company to mount surveillance cameras on buses, a way of catching drivers in the act.

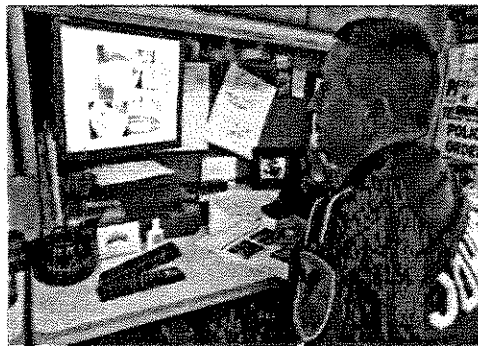
Now, with only a handful of buses in Providence and Johnston equipped with the cameras, the number of citations has soared.

In just the five months since Providence-based

Smart Bus Live put cameras on the outside of four buses in Johnston, the police issued 108 citations, up from only 2 in all of 2007. In Providence, there were 9 citations in 2007; this year, with the number of buses equipped with surveillance cameras growing from 2 in January to 10 today, the cameras had uncovered 591 violations as of the end of May.

"I didn't think there would be so many who would do something as egregious as pass a school bus, especially when the stop sign is out and the lights are flashing," said Alfred A. Card, of Cranston, the owner of Smart Bus Live. "But it's really

SEE VIDEO, A4



THE PROVIDENCE JOURNAL / FRIEDA SQUIRES

projo.com/video

Johnston police Sgt. Marc Boisvert watches a display from Smart Bus Live, the company that mounts surveillance cameras on school buses. For a demonstration by Boisvert of how the system works go to projo.com/video

Obama plots a new course for Mideast

The president hopes to find common ground with the Muslim world during his trip.

JOURNAL WIRE REPORTS

President Obama has set a high bar for his trip to the Middle East and Europe that begins Wednesday. By his own description, he is on a truth-telling mission. The challenges are clear: Can he successfully reach out to the Muslim world without offending Israel? Can words move either side to do what they have resisted in the past?

Like so much about Mr. Obama's foreign policy, this trip will be viewed through the prism of the Bush administration and the degree to which Mr. Obama's administration represents continuity or a new direction. Clearly his goal is to signal a new era in relations with the Muslim world. But Mr. Obama's words will be measured and analyzed by audiences with conflicting interests, ancient grievances and long memories of other presidents.

SEE OBAMA, A6



OBAMA

Obama's itinerary

Wednesday: President Obama arrives in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and meets with King Abdullah.

Thursday: Mr. Obama is in Cairo to meet with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Mr. Obama is also scheduled to deliver what the White House is characterizing as a major address in which he will discuss how the United States and Muslim communities can bridge some of their differences. In particular, the president will address the issues of violent extremism and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Friday: The president is in Germany for talks with Chancellor Angela Merkel. Mr. Obama will also visit the site of the former Nazi concentration camp at Buchenwald and meet with wounded U.S. troops at a military hospital in Landsuhl.

Saturday: Mr. Obama will be in France for a bilateral meeting with President Nicolas Sarkozy. The president will also participate in ceremonies marking the 65th anniversary of the D-Day invasion at an American cemetery in Colleville, France.

Source: The White House

In death, partners would have a say

The Senate approves a bill that would allow domestic partners to make funeral arrangements for their loved ones.

BY KATHERINE GREGG
JOURNAL STATE HOUSE BUREAU

PROVIDENCE — Responding to one of the more heart-wrenching personal stories to emerge from the same-sex marriage debate, the Senate on Tuesday approved a bill giving "domestic partners" the right to claim the bodies of — and make funeral arrangements for — their loved

ones. A domestic partner is defined in the measure as "a person who prior to the decedent's death was in an exclusive, intimate and committed relationship with the decedent."

Despite hours of hearings at the State House — and seismic developments in other Northeast states — this bill is the only one of the dueling defense-of-marriage, same-sex marriage, divorce and equal-rights bills introduced in Rhode Island this year that has managed to make it out of a legislative com-

SEE PARTNERS, A6

Air Force recruiter faces drug charges

Their reluctant defendant is a detainee

BY KATIE MULVANEY

Patricia A. Sullivan and Dominic E.



A sign on the side of a Providence school bus warns motorists that new surveillance cameras are in use.

Video

Continued from Page A1

an epidemic."

Cardi was a self-employed financial services consultant in Cranston when a friend told him about a Louisiana firm that had installed cameras on buses in a school district there. He acquired the rights to the patented technology so he could market the concept here.

But the system was so new that neither he nor local school systems could do anything without getting enabling legislation from the General Assembly to let them use the digital wireless devices as the basis for issuing tickets. They also needed a new way of sharing revenue from fines. Under the old system, courts could impose a fine of "up to \$300" that would be split between the municipality and the state. The new law makes the \$300 fine mandatory and dictates that 75 percent of the revenue go to the video company, with the remaining 25 percent shared equally by the municipality and the state.

Johnston was the first in the state to put cameras on some of its bus routes, beginning in late November, on some of its most heavily traveled roads — Killingly and Plainfield streets, Hartford and Greenville avenues and Memorial Drive. About six weeks later, on Jan. 12, Providence got into the act.

Given that the cameras are provided free to the municipalities, with Smart Bus Live picking up the tab with revenue from the fines, everyone involved says they see the system as a win: there's new revenue for municipalities and the company, and a new way to catch violators.

Johnston police Maj. Ralph Bubar III says the cameras have given the department another set of eyes. Before, he says, it was next to impossible to prosecute a violator because so much depended on the bus driver's being able to see and then remember the license number whizzing by at the same time driver was discharging passengers. Now, he says, the police have the benefit of being able to review a video from several different angles and decide whether it warrants a citation.

"We have had a few people try to dispute it," Bubar said. "But once they see the evidence, they usually concede defeat and pay the fine."

And there's an added incentive in the law that makes it even more worthwhile for the car's registered owner to settle and pay. If the owner willingly pays the \$300 fine, it does not go on the owner's driving record because the video gives no indication of who was behind the wheel. But if the owner fights and is found guilty, the violation will go on his or her permanent driving record as a moving violation. It will also cost more, because the driver would be liable for court costs of \$35, and increased fines of up to \$500 if it is not the first offense.

According to Cardi and his business director, Thomas O'Connor, the heart of the system is an array of seven video cameras on each bus, transmitting live images back to the com-

Rules of the road

If red lights are flashing on a school bus, the law requires that motorists approaching from either direction come to a full stop and remain stopped until the bus' red lights no longer flash. This applies not only to public highways but private roads and parking lots. Motorists don't have to stop if they are driving in the opposite direction of the bus on a highway where the lanes are separated by guardrail, Jersey barrier, grass or trees.

Failing to stop is considered a moving violation, with a fine of up to \$300 and or a suspension of one's driver's license for up to 30 days for the first violation. If the citation results from live video surveillance, the citation carries a mandatory \$300 fine but is not deemed to be a moving violation that goes on one's driving record.

pany's headquarters above the U.S. Homeland Security offices at 49 Pavilion Ave. in Providence.

Three of those cameras are in a box near the front of the bus; two provide views of the oncoming lanes of traffic, and one provides an 180-degree shot showing the side of the bus. Four cameras in the rear offer views of lanes behind, including any cars that may be approaching or passing in the rear.

The live feeds — one camera angle at a time from each bus — are viewed, as they happen, by three Smart Bus Live employees who electronically tag any evidence of a violation.

In the case of Johnston, those tagged images are then electronically sent to the Police Department's traffic division, where Lt. Daniel Parrillo and Sgt. Marc Boisvert review the images to see if a citation is warranted. Boisvert says that out of an abundance of fairness, they don't cite a driver already at or near a bus when the bus stops, but only those who pass after some time has elapsed.

"It's amazing," Boisvert says, "how many cars will pass seven seconds after the lights have started flashing."

In Providence's case, officers from the police traffic division go to Smart Bus Live offices on Pavilion Street and conduct reviews there.

No records are available as to how many citations have been dismissed, but officers say they are few. Johnston's Boisvert said that since the program went into effect he and Lieutenant Parrillo have been subpoenaed eight times to be witnesses before the state Traffic Tribunal, but in each instance the trial never went forward. He says he isn't aware of a single instance when a citation has been overturned.

Cardi, the Smart Bus Live owner, says he can't estimate how many buses in Rhode Island will be equipped with the surveillance cameras a year from now. He says it is a gradual process that depends on how many cameras the company can buy with the money generated from the fines — an estimated \$157,000 so far, based on the company's share of 699 fines.

"We really see this as a deterrent, because the more drivers know they could get caught passing a school bus, the less likely they will do it," Cardi said. "Our aim is child safety."

rdjardil@projo.com / (401) 277-7334

ing measures had been exhausted."

The Yemeni prisoner, also known as Mohammad Ahmed Abdullah Saleh Al-Hanashi, had been held without charge at Guantanamo since February 2002. Military records show the alleged Taliban fighter was about 31.

The suicide occurred late Monday, but it was not revealed by the military until after a dozen journalists who were covering a military tribunal session left the base near midday Tuesday. A Defense Department official said the reason was that the Yemen

About 100 of the 240 prisoners at Guantanamo are from Yemen, more than from any other nation. Some of the Yemenis at Guantanamo have been approved for release from the prison for several years but they are in limbo because the United States is unwilling to release prisoners to Yemen, fearing the weak central government there will be unable to monitor and control them. The prisoner appears to have joined the long-running hunger strike at Guantanamo, according to medical records previously released by the military in response to a Freedom of Informa-

His weight was down to about 86 pounds in December 2005. He weighed 124 pounds when he was first taken to Guantanamo in February 2002.

A prison spokesman, Navy Lt. Cmdr. Brook DeWalt, confirmed the incident but declined to discuss details.

DeWalt declined to say whether procedures have changed at the prison as a result of the apparent suicide.

Guantanamo critics said the death underscores the urgent need to close the U.S. prison as soon as possible.

"This kind of desperation is

Island. The Naval Criminal Investigative Service has been investigating the circumstances surrounding the death. The Joint Task Force Guantanamo, which is the U.S. authority that oversees the prison, is also investigating the death. The death of al-Qaida's guest housekeeper, Mazar, is part of the uprising.

Detainee

Continued from Page A1

think you need to give these people a fair shake," Sullivan says. So far, Noori has refused their help. He won't even see them.

The U.S. labeled Noori an enemy combatant after the Northern Alliance seized Mazar-e Sharif from the Taliban in the first major offensive in the war in Afghanistan following the Sept. 11 attacks. A U.S. military tribunal continued to hold him after a review in 2004 found he had fought on the Taliban's front lines as a Kalashnikov-toting guard for the city's governor and had served as acting governor for a period.

But Sullivan and Sherman tell a different tale. They say Noori was a low-level civil servant working for the government at the time the Taliban took power. "He was a clerk," Sullivan, of Barrington, says. "If you're the mayor of Warwick, you do more."

They say an elder advised him to go with Taliban forces who were about to surrender, telling him he would then be released to his home south of the city. Instead, the Northern Alliance turned him over to the Americans and he became one of close to 800 Guantanamo detainees. Noori denied the charges, saying through an interpreter he was a poor man. "I needed to survive, so I did work with the government, which was at the time the Taliban government and I work with them and that's the only mistake I made, but I didn't have a choice because I had to provide for my family."

Sullivan and Sherman are challenging Noori's detention and restrictions placed on another Afghan, Mohammed Yacoub. Yacoub was released from Guantanamo to Afghanistan, where he was imprisoned for a time and still carries the enemy combatant label, they say. Neither man has been criminally charged.

The lawyers filed habeas corpus petitions for both under the legal principle that prisoners have the right to demand that the government prove it has just cause to hold them. It is guaranteed in the Constitution, except in cases of rebellion or invasion when public safety may require it.

Roger Williams University School of Law professor Peter S. Margulies approached Sherman in 2007 about representing detainees. "He said, 'How'd you like to do something interesting?'" recalled Sherman, who typically focuses on environmental and commercial law.

They met with their law firm's management, which gave them the go-ahead and has picked up many of the costs of the pro-bono effort. They are among more than 500 law-

241 detainees at Guantanamo Bay

Guantanamo Bay is home to a United States naval base, on a 45-square-mile tract on the southeastern coast of Cuba. The land was first leased in 1903, and base operations have continued even as the United States cut ties with Cuba when Fidel Castro took over the country, and today it may be best known for the detention center housed there.

Since 2002, about 800 people have been detained at Guantanamo as enemy combatants, captured in the U.S.-led invasion of Afghanistan and the ensuing war on terrorism. Many detainees have been released to their home country or transferred to prisons in other countries. Most have been detained at least four years, but some have been at the facility for more than six years. Human-rights organizations have criticized the facility, pointing to allegations of human-rights abuse, torture, and a short history of denying detainees basic legal rights. Currently, there are 241 detainees still being held at the facility.

President Obama campaigned on promises to close the Guantanamo center by January 2010. Those efforts were blocked in May when the Senate voted against providing the \$80 million Mr. Obama said was needed to close it. Senators voiced concerns about where the detainees would go once released and called for a clearer plan for closing Guantanamo.

Meanwhile, Mr. Obama has restarted a military trial system with more legal rights for detainees. Thirteen detainees are already in the tribunal system, including five charged in connection with the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks.

— Talia Buford

yers working with the Center for Constitutional Rights, a nonprofit dedicated to protecting constitutional and human rights. The cases didn't gain traction until the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in June 2008 that every detainee had the right to challenge his detention in federal court.

The Bush administration had asserted the government could hold an "enemy combatant" indefinitely if it was believed the detainee had supported forces engaged in hostilities against the United States or its partners.

Shortly after taking office in January, President Obama issued an executive order that Guantanamo Bay detention center close by January 2010. He directed that the cases of the 240 remaining Guantanamo detainees be reviewed to determine if they should be relocated or tried — a move that has drawn

criticism from Republicans over fears about detainees.

In March, Sullivan and from Fort Lauderdale to meet with Noori. They travel next morning to the military ed in a veil-like covering. A tied them and about six of McDonald's restaurant. The alerted them that Noori might meet.

Sullivan sent in a note, te were not from the govern there to help. Noori would note. "We had no option B Sullivan said. They learned back in Rhode Island that i the letter announcing their v Sherman speculate that son cline to see attorneys beca pressed or fear retribution.

By court order, Noori, o member, must agree to let him. The lawyers have now gator to track down his wife consent. If they do not get ap he might be held in perpetu

More than 300 detainees leased so far, some to rep abroad. Sixteen still being i ered "high value," including a tor, according to the milira Sherman do not know if No 65 detainees the United St prosecute.

Sherman and Sullivan vi formation about Noori at a Virginia. All legal work invo rial must remain on a hard safe at the site. All notes mu

"I have no doubt that sor are terrorists, but they sh Sherman says. "They can't a Asked about his motivation, "I'm not doing it as a politic doing it to vindicate the syst getting abused."

It doesn't matter whethe Republicans are in power, h tainees deserve their day in reflection on [the United Sta a good reflection," he said.

A spokesman for the U.S. Justice declined to discuss th couc cases. But, spokesman l the high court's June 2008 habeas lawyers a chance to " ly for their client in court. Th cess there."

Responding to criticism a nite holding of detainees to i said. "That's one of the p Obama made the executive we're going to take a fresh i

kmshane@projo.com / (401) 277-74

Recruiter

Continued from Page A1

for the Rhode Island Guard.

Hours after Flamand was brought to District Court on felony drug charges Tuesday, the Rhode Island Guard's commanding general, Maj. Gen. Robert T. Bray, placed recruiting operations on "stand down" for five days for an audit of the recruiting offices and refresher classes for staff on ethics and legal training.

"The alleged actions of Technical Sergeant Richard Flamand are not in keeping with the core values of the United States Air Force or the R.I. National Guard and if sustained, are a gross violation of our sacred trust with the people of Rhode Island and the

citizens of the United States," Bray said in a statement Tuesday afternoon.

"Clearly, we have an obligation to determine if any organizational practices or culture had a contributory role in allowing this alleged situation to develop unnoticed within our workplace," said Bray, who also is the state adjutant general.

Flamand was arrested on Monday after investigators from the state police High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area Task Force and the Air Force Office of Special Investigations seized cocaine, marijuana and several thousand doses of prescription medication, including OxyContin, Suboxone, methadone and hydrocodone, from his truck and his house at 33 Circle Drive, Coventry, according to the state po-

lice.

Forty grams of cocaine and prescription medication were found at Flamand's office at the Air National Guard, the state police said. Flamand had \$7,616, which the state police said was seized during the arrest.

State police Capt. David S. Neill said the Air Force had contacted his agency several weeks ago after getting a tip that Flamand was dealing prescription drugs from his house and the recruiting office. As the state police investigated, they were able to buy drugs from Flamand at his house, Neill said.

Flamand faces five felony charges: possession of cocaine of one ounce to one kilogram; possession with intent to deliver schedule I-II controlled drugs; possession with intent to deliver

schedule III-IV or possession of mariju

District Court LaFazia ordered pending a bail he

Flamand was i lieved of duty at suspended, pendi of the criminal i fairs investigation man Lt. Col. Den tional Guard may via the court-mar der the Uniform itary Justice, a dr wait until adjud criminal charges.

"We're looking isolated incident," team of recruiter the developments

amilkewil@pr...s.com/i

STUDIES AND RESEARCH

Police monitor school bus safety with unmarked cars

Published: 01:05 a.m., Thursday, January 21, 2010

Editor's note: Reporter Brittany Lyte spent two mornings following school buses with the New Canaan Police Department.

By Brittany Lyte

On mornings when school is in session, New Canaan tikes and teens stand huddled at bus stops and wait to pile onto the big yellow taxi for a ride to school. As the school bus slows to a halt and its double doors push open to let New Canaan Public Schools students aboard, a stop sign extends like an arm from the side of the bus.

All traffic on the road comes to a standstill as motorists brake their vehicles until the flashing red octagon retreats -- or, at least, that is what should happen.

Since NCPS partnered with the New Canaan Police Department last month to bolster enforcement of the law that punishes motorists for passing stopped school buses, officers have caught at least one driver each week.

According to Officer Ron Bentley, one offender is one too many.

"The ones that we're getting are absolutely blatant school bus passes," Bentley said. "Just total disregard for the anyone's safety."

The effort for increased compliance, called Operation Safe School Bus Stop, involves stationing officers on school buses and in unmarked vehicles traveling behind buses.

Another program component is education.

"We need to make clear that the owner of the vehicle is responsible if the operator of the vehicle is not identified or produced," Capt. Leon Krolkowski said. "Right now, that's not clear."

It is illegal to pass a stopped school bus that has its red warning lights activated. When these lights are flashing, motorists must stop their vehicle at least 10 feet from the front of the bus and at least 10 feet from the rear of the bus. Flashing yellow lights on a school bus should be treated as a yellow traffic signal, which warns drivers to prepare to stop.

"If a kid is getting off the bus at school, and say he drops something that rolls under the bus and goes to the other side of the bus, and he runs around -- if you hit the kid, you're not going to be

able to live with yourself," Bentley said. "And it's just because you wanted to go home and play tennis or to do whatever it is you're rushing to do.

"You ruin several people's lives if you hit that child. Not only the child, but the family -- everyone pays the price ... I'm not aware of any children getting hurt, but I know there have been several close calls."

On any given day when school is in session, there are up to three officers following NCPS buses along their morning routes in unmarked vehicles. Three mornings per week, Bentley begins his school bus shift at 6:15 a.m. He spends those mornings monitoring motorists as he trails along high school, middle school and elementary school bus routes. If a vehicle passes a standing bus, he is prepared to stop the driver and serve him or her a \$460 fine.

According to Bentley, there are three major arteries that run in and out of New Canaan: Route 123, Route 124 and Old Stamford Road. These three roads are hot spots for drivers who illegally pass stopped school buses, he said.

"They're going to the train station, or wherever they're going, and they're in a hurry to go nowhere," he said.

In the last 18 months, NCPD officers have investigated about 25 violations -- about 20 of which have led to infractions, according to Krolikowski.

"I view violations of this sort close to driving while intoxicated -- it's that dangerous," Krolikowski said.

Many of these offenses have occurred on school grounds, he said.

"It's probably parents," he said. "It's probably someone associated with the school."

Bentley agrees. Two weeks ago, a Saxe Middle School psychologist earned a \$460 fine for passing a stopped bus on school property, he said.

"The majority of the people that complain [about motorists passing buses] are New Canaan residents; the majority of the people that get caught are New Canaan residents," Bentley said. "You look at them, and you're like, 'You're the one who wants us to enforce this, yet you're doing it.'"

NCPS school buses are outfit with three video cameras: one inside the rear of the bus that monitors the students, one that records students as they enter and exit the bus and another about 2 feet behind the flashing stop sign. That third camera is positioned to record images of the motorists, vehicles and license plates that pass the bus when it is stopped.

Unfortunately, Krolikowski said, the video footage is not recognized as evidence of a violation. Before an officer can enforce the law, the statute requires that either an officer see the violation or a bus driver submit a description of the vehicle and the motorist.

It's difficult for bus drivers to give a description of the motorist when his or her focus is on the road and the children, Bentley said.

"All he can see is that yes, a car went through a stop sign," he said.

According to Police Commission Chairman Jim Cole, the commission and department are working to secure stricter enforcement of the current law and enhanced penalties like court appearances, misdemeanor violations or mandatory license suspensions.

"There are a lot of roads coming in from New York to New Canaan filled with people trying to catch the train," Bentley said. "They'll get behind a bus and they'll get very impatient, so they'll pass the bus. Now, if you pass a bus over a double line, it's about a \$1,000 ticket because it's passing in a no-passing zone, it's a failure to drive right and it's passing a standing school bus. So it's roughly around \$1,000 just because they wanted to be impatient."

The court doesn't show any leniency when it comes to school bus passing, he said.

"If you know that a bus is routinely on this road at this time, 7:30 a.m., be on the road prior to that time so that you don't get stuck behind the bus," Bentley said. "Leave a little earlier while school is in session. It's an obvious fix."

Motorists slapped with fines
By Frank Maceachern
Staff Writer

Source: SCNI
Monday, February 1, 2010
Edition: Greenwich Time, Section: News, Page A001

By Frank MacEachern
Staff Writer

Some of the reasons motorists give after they are nabbed for passing a stopped school bus with its red lights flashing defy logic, said an officer in the town's traffic unit.

"They'll say: 'Was it a yellow bus, I didn't see it.' I can't believe you can miss a yellow bus with flashing red lights," said Sgt. John Slusarz. "They are made to be seen," Slusarz said in disbelief.

Police last Monday launched Adopt-a-Bus, a campaign to nab, as well as educate, drivers who speed by stopped school buses. Police said they have been receiving numerous complaints of drivers passing stopped buses.

Part of that education is reminding drivers traveling in both directions that they have to stop. That also applies to motorists on the four-lane Route 1, said Officer Roger Drenth.

As he wheeled his unmarked Dodge Charger behind a school bus on a morning last week, Drenth said many motorists on Route 1 believe they don't have to stop for school buses if they are traveling in the opposite direction.

"Sometimes they don't know or they get confused," he said. "Other times they do it deliberately because they are late for work and they just drive by."

Drenth said motorists, especially commuters, are creatures of habit, leaving their homes at the exact time every day to get to work.

But when they get delayed on the road, often they will take shortcuts, even if it means passing a stopped school bus, he said.

"They will say they did it because they are late for work," said Drenth, adding that commuters should give themselves a little extra time before heading to work.

"How hard is it to go into work five minutes early?" he asked.

It's a stiff \$460 fine for passing a stopped school bus, but officers don't budge when they give out the ticket, Drenth said.

"None of the guys have any qualms about giving tickets -- what price do you put on the life of a child?" he said. "We have been blessed because no child has been hit." Drenth couldn't recall a car hitting a student in town in his more than two-decade career with the department.

To beef up the three-man traffic unit to five officers, Chief David Ridberg approved temporarily transferring marine unit officers.

The town's 21 schools are fed by 117 bus routes, Drenth said. Of the nine tickets handed out during the first three days of the blitz, six came from officers following a bus delivering students to Convent of the Sacred Heart on King Street, Drenth said.

Most of those tickets were issued on Route 1 in Cos Cob, he said.

"We probably could have had more, but we ran out of officers," said Drenth, adding that two cruisers nabbed offenders within minutes of one another Tuesday morning as they followed the same bus en route to Sacred Heart.

The nine tickets issued were a sobering statistic to Thomas Bobkowski, Greenwich Public Schools' director of safety and security.

"I'm kind of shocked the number is that high. It's kind of scary that many people are passing stopped school buses," he said. "I would think more adults to look at the ramifications of passing a school bus."

Bradsley Rumble isn't surprised by the tickets issued.

Currently assistant manager and safety officer with Student Transportation of America, which provides bus transportation for Greenwich students, Rumble began as a bus driver 18 years.

"In my time, I have seen near misses on the road and it's something our drivers still experience," he said.

His office is located near the New York Sports Clubs facility in Stamford just across the town line from Old Greenwich.

"It happens on a regular basis; sometimes people don't know about the law and how strict it is, some people are not paying attention, and some think it doesn't apply to them," Rumble said. "Not to mention cell phones, it is one of the biggest distractions really."

School bus drivers are urged to drive carefully and to give motorists appropriate time to stop, he said.

Drenth said motorists shouldn't be surprised if an unmarked cruiser emerges from behind school bus to chase a violator. Police plan to continue the campaign in the coming weeks.

"The chief said we can do this as much as we can," he promised.

Staff Writer Frank MacEachern can be reached at frank.maceachern@scni.com or 203-625-4434.

Police to crack down on motorists passing stopped school buses

By Frank MacEachern, Staff Writer

Published: 10:28 p.m., Sunday, January 24, 2010

Motorists who drive by a school bus when it's stopped with its red lights flashing may find themselves digging deep into their wallets to pay a ticket.

Today, police launch a safety campaign dubbed Operation Adopt-a-Bus, where officers in unmarked cruisers will follow a school bus to catch any motorists who pass a stopped school bus with flashing lights. The fine for the first offense is \$460.

Thomas Bobkowski, director of safety and security with Greenwich Public Schools, welcomed the initiative.

"This is something that came to us out of the traffic division which we thought was a wonderful idea," he said. "Anything that can enhance student safety, we are 100 percent behind."

Bobkowski, who worked for 28 years as a police officer in Monroe before joining the public school system three years ago, said it was an infraction he always took seriously while in law enforcement.

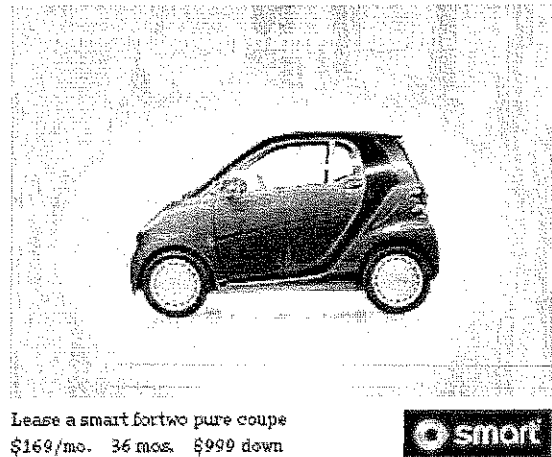
"That was one of the violations that I would never bend on, the fact you could harm a child by not stopping."

He regularly monitors school bus stops and hasn't seen a violation yet, he said, but parents who do notice it are quick to either telephone or report it to the school system on its Web site. He said they also will call police.

Bobkowski said no students have been struck by a vehicle this school year, nor have there been any near misses reported to him. But still, there have been cases of motorists passing school buses, sometimes without knowing they are committing an offense, he said.

"On the Post Road, because it is a four-lane highway, sometimes they are not sure they have to stop (if they are going in the other direction). Sometimes they do it because they are late for work. No matter what the reason is, they have to obey the red flashing lights on the bus," he said.

Motorists have to stop at least 10 feet in front of or behind a bus when the red lights are activated.



The law applies to school property as well.

A spokesman for New Jersey-based Student Transportation of America, which provides bus service to Greenwich schools, said the crackdown will ensure student safety especially during high-traffic periods.

"We welcome any enforcement and assistance especially in a town like Greenwich that has a high number of commuters coming in and out at the same time our buses pick up kids," said John Stang, the company's Atlantic region director of operations.

The company's drivers report everything at the end of their shift and Stang said police take their information seriously.

"The police department is very good about following up; they follow up with everything we turn in and I know they will issue citations."

Staff Writer Frank MacEachern can be reached at frank.maceachern@scni.com or 203-625-4434.

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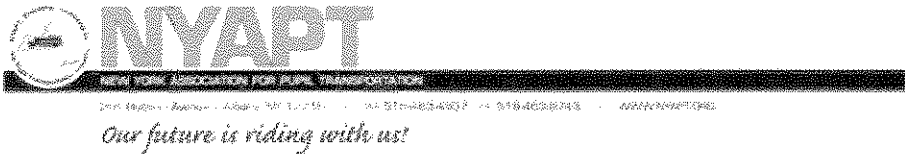
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News from New York Association for Pupil Transportation

For more information contact: Peter Mannella, 518-463-4937

Illegal Passing Is Dangerous to Our Children

Cameras on Brewster School Buses to Help Deter Violators

ALBANY, NY (04/30/2009; 1800)(readMedia)-- Calling illegal passing of school buses an ominous risk for our children, the New York Association for Pupil Transportation announced that it is working with the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee to deploy advanced technology in the Brewster Central School District to apprehend drivers who pass school buses that are stopped to pick up or drop off students.

This new technology comes in the form of an MPH-900 Advanced License Plate Reader manufactured by ELSAG, North America. The ELSAG equipment is currently in use by dozens of police agencies across New York State to aid in major law enforcement activities. Use of the ELSAG MPH-900 in Brewster is being supported under a pilot project through a grant to NYAPT from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

NYAPT Executive Director, Peter Mannella, noted "illegal passing of school buses presents a terrible risk for our children. Our children are entitled to know that they can get onto and off of their school bus each day without fear of injury or death. Motorists – our neighbors and families -- need to STOP for our children's sake. We hope this technology will help call attention to the extent of the problem!"

U.S. Representative John Hall (D-19) stated that: "Today we are announcing a significant effort to keep the children of Brewster safe from reckless drivers. Sadly, all too often drivers ignore stop signs that warn drivers that small children are crossing the street on their way to or from school. Statistics from the NY Association for Pupil Transportation show that motorists pass stopped school buses at least 50,000 times each day in New York State. The consequences can be fatal. Injury to even one child is unacceptable, and reckless drivers need to be punished. But to be punished, they must be caught, which where the cameras, built by ELSAG, which is headquartered right here in Brewster, come in. This project is a great example of a partnership between the private sector, local and state government, and the federal government that provided a grant from the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration. I'm pleased to support federal

transportation safety initiatives from my position on the House Transportation Committee because these sorts of projects, like the one we're talking about today, quite literally save lives."

This innovative and cutting edge effort to help combat such a dangerous problem is being deployed on school buses in three school districts for the remainder of the school year. Under the project NYAPT intends to demonstrate the effectiveness of such devices in identifying and apprehending motorists who pass school buses illegally and therefore endanger our children. NYAPT also intends to use the experience with the cameras to drive home the message to motorists that this is not only illegal activity but also is dangerous for our children. Accordingly, the pilot project will include public education and issuance of formal warnings to violators.

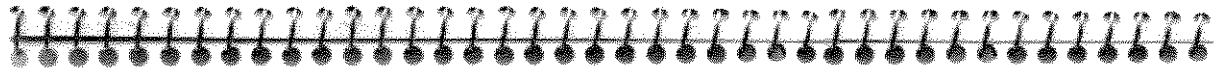
NYAPT wants to remind the public that the law requires vehicles to STOP for a school bus that is stopped and has its red flashing lights engaged. Those flashing red lights mean that a child is about to board the school bus or step down from the school bus. In short, all vehicles moving in either direction are required by law to STOP. Violators face stiff penalties that include fines and points on one's license in addition to possible time in jail. NYAPT notes the startling fact that, despite the law, motorists pass stop school buses at least 50,000 times each day in New York State. That is at least 50,000 times every day that a child is placed at great risk of being injured or even killed.

In addition to a school bus in the Brewster Central Schools, the project will equip school buses from the Bethlehem Central School District and the Canandaigua City School District.

For further information on this important pilot project or on the overall issue of illegal passing of school buses, please contact Peter Mannella at the New York Association for Pupil Transportation at 518-463-4937 or cell at 518-588-3924.

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'Operation Yellow Blitz' targets motorists who don't stop for school buses

October 21, 2009 02:20 PM



Globe photo by Wendy Maeda

A school bus this morning on Mount Auburn Street in Watertown. The town was among those targeted in a crackdown on motorists who fail to stop for buses.

By Christina Pazzanese, Globe Correspondent

Local police departments across the state were out in force this morning handing motorists who failed to stop for school buses as they picked up children an unpleasant surprise: a \$250 ticket.

Dubbed "Operation Yellow Blitz," over 110 cities and towns in Massachusetts set up early morning or afternoon patrols today to coincide with National School Bus Safety Week.

The undercover sting has so far nabbed 76 drivers statewide, according to Registry of Motor Vehicles, which coordinated the operation.

Woburn drivers topped the list with nine violations issued, followed by seven in Watertown, while Brockton and North Reading motorists each racked up six, according to data provided by the Registry of Motor Vehicles. Over 60 communities did not give out any citations.

Now in its fifth year, the effort is part of a push by Governor Deval Patrick's administration to make drivers more aware they'll face stiff penalties if they flout a state law that requires traffic in both directions to stop when school buses turn on their flashing red lights.

Registry officials gathered on North Beacon Street and on Mt. Auburn Street in Watertown shortly after 7 a.m. today as police pulled over and cited seven drivers for passing a school bus while children were boarding.

Registrar of Motor Vehicles, Rachel Kaprielian called the blitz is a "powerful deterrent" and warned the agency and police have "zero tolerance" for scofflaws.

"This is ensuring that people are in fact stopping for school buses," she said. "The cargo inside is too precious."

Drivers ticketed by police are hit with a \$250 fine for a first offense; a second offense carries a \$500 fine and an automatic suspension of a motorist's driver license for 60 days, said Ann Dufresne, a registry spokeswoman.

Violators who rack up two citations within a two-year period will be saddled with a \$1,000 fine and lose their driving privileges for six months, she said.

Many motorists tell police they aren't aware that traffic in both directions must stop for a school bus, not just those traveling behind or in an adjacent lane, said Sgt. Joseph Deignan of the Watertown Police Department.

And their excuses are pretty weak.

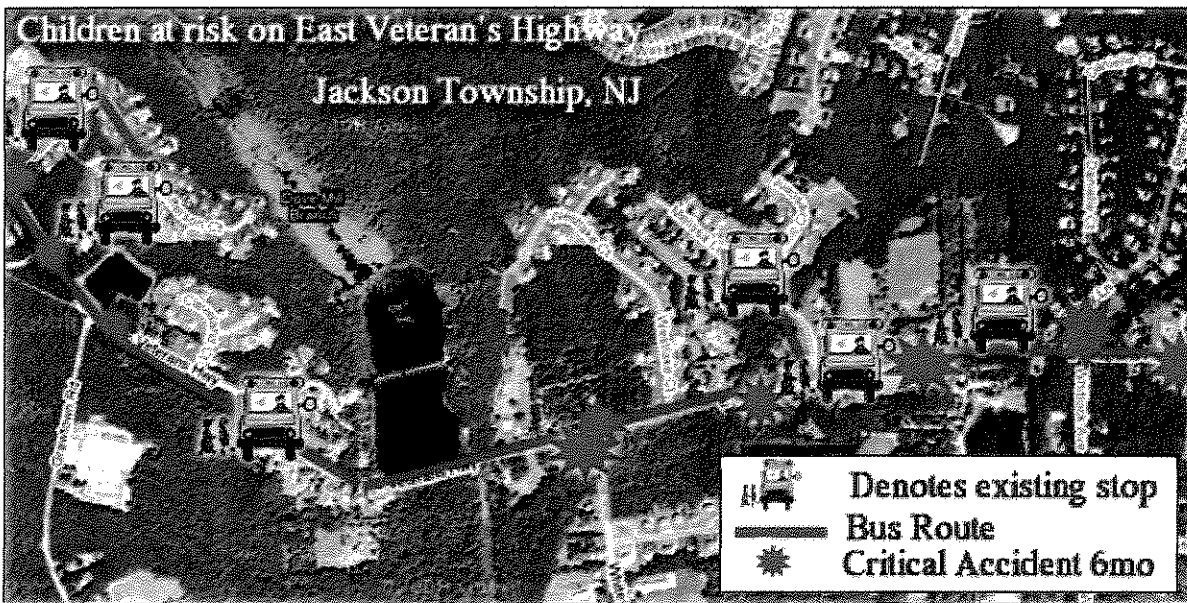
"Most of it's, 'I didn't know, I didn't see it,'" said Deignan.

Based on complaints reported by bus drivers, police and other citizens, the Registry has sent out just over 1800 warning letters to suspected rule breakers this year, said Dufresne.

Those who have received two warning letters will be called in for an administrative hearing, she said.

50,000 cars pass school buses every day : New Jersey News – Jackson Township, Toms River, Freehold, Ocean County, NJ, US and World News

April 24, 2009 by Phil Stilton
Filed under Feature



According to a new report from Newsday today, 2.3 million children in New York State ride the bus to school everyday and over 50,000 times per day. Students in that state are at risk for getting hit by a car every single day, according to John McCormick, president of the New York Association for Pupil Transportation.

In June 2006, Chana Friedlander, 5 was killed when a passing motorist struck her as she crossed the street to board her school bus.

In the five years from 2002 to 2007, 75 children were reported injured by vehicles that had passed their stopped school buses, transportation officials said.

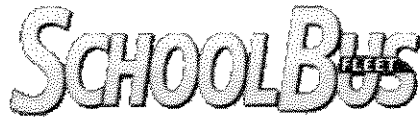
New York State has had a school bus safe stop program for nearly 14 years and in that time, they have been successful in eliminating fatalities caused by passing school buses and created awareness on the roads that the state is serious about stop arm violations.

The program is so successful because it works at the community level and not the state level. Local communities adopt and maintain their own programs in their own ways, crafted to suit their own communities.

Our town, Jackson, NJ also has a stop arm violation problem which puts our own children at risk each and every day. On one stop alone, vehicles have passed the school bus on over 20 different occasions on the 50mph East Veterans Highway.

Those instances were reported to the school district, who refused to act or to report those violations to the Jackson Township Police Department. 1/3 of Jackson's buses are equipped with onboard external video cameras, costing taxpayers over \$30,000, but the Board of Education and the district refuse to acknowledge the problem. They have also refused to turn those cameras on and begin monitoring the stop arm violation problem in our town in order to effectively identify possible violation hot spots.

We have begun an online petition to ask our Board of Education to turn on the cameras and start working with the Jackson Township Police Department and Ocean County Prosecutors to take proactive measures to protect our children. We have also asked to limit our children's exposure to stop arm violations and rear end accidents by re evaluating the location of bus stop on 50 mph highways. So far the district has balked at safety. They have balked at protecting our children.



November 2008

Putting a Stop to Illegal Passing

With an increasing number of motorists passing school buses illegally each day in the U.S., school officials are turning to law enforcement, video technology and the media to counteract the high rate of stop arm violations, which unnecessarily put children's lives in danger.

by Claire Atkinson, Senior Editor



We see the headlines every day, from all parts of the country. From the *Port St. Lucie (Fla.) News*: "St. Lucie County law enforcement says many bus stop accidents can be avoided." From the *Lake County (Ill.) News-Sun*: "Police crack down on school bus passers." From the *Times & Democrat* in Orangeburg, S.C.: "School openings mean more traffic, more crashes, more efforts to change trend."

The news is full of stories warning motorists to be aware of buses and students, especially at the beginning of the school year. Yet drivers continue to pass school buses illegally, putting law enforcement officials and pupil transportation professionals at their wits' end. How to get through to the public that when the stop sign is out and the red lights are flashing, all vehicles must stop?

The Pupil Transportation Safety Institute recently issued a public service announcement, in which Syracuse (N.Y.) City School District Transportation Director Pat Bailey warns of the severity of the illegal-passing problem and urges motorists to stop when a school bus' lights are flashing and the stop arm is activated.

In a guide to reducing illegal passing of the school bus released by the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, the agency cites reasons for the frequency of stop arm violations. Often, violations are not reported because it is difficult for school bus drivers to gather the information needed to prosecute motorists. In addition, the law goes unenforced in many areas because police officers are not on hand to catch violators. Lastly, the public is largely ignorant of the law prohibiting the passing of a school bus when the stop sign is activated and red lights are flashing; many are also not aware that the law applies to vehicles on both sides of undivided roads.

Ron Kinney, director of government and industry relations for First Student, tells a story from his days as a school

bus driver of parking his bus to escort children across the street (as required by law for elementary students in California) and having to prevent a mother from running over her own children getting off the bus. "She ran the red lights, and I said, 'What are you doing? These are your kids I'm trying to get across the street here,'" Kinney recalls. "Let me tell you, she did not see the bus."

"There are some idiots out there — don't get me wrong — but for the most part, people that run the red lights are folks that are right there in your own community," he continues. "Some of them even have kids on your buses. They're not doing it to be malicious. In fact, they don't even know that they do it, half the time."

"I think as long as you or I are on this earth, we're going to continue to have [violations]," says Larry Bluthardt, Kansas state director of pupil transportation, "until it strikes home, where there's a catastrophe, and then in that area, you'll see everyone start to pay more attention."

This lack of awareness on the part of motorists — who are often in a rush, driving on "autopilot" or distracted by cell phones or other devices — means that the problem will never disappear completely. But with the combined efforts of school officials, transportation experts, parents, police and communities, violations can be held at a minimum, reducing risk and saving lives.

Outreach to the public

Kinney theorizes that motorists need to be "reprogrammed" to recognize new obstacles or signals while driving. "They go down the same road every day, and their mind is a mile away thinking about something else," he says. On the other hand, the drivers who do see the school bus sometimes get frustrated that it's blocking their path, prompting them to make a risky pass on the left or even the right side of the bus. Some are so angered by the presence of the bus on the road that they call the school to complain.

Bluthardt recommends that school transportation personnel be prepared for these calls. "What we tell folks when they start calling is, 'Call the transportation office, ask them what time that bus is going to be coming by, and then alter your route,'" he explains. "We've even had bus schedules published in local newspapers."

Outreach to the public can be a crucial component in a program to reduce stop arm violations. If the public is more aware of pupil transportation in their community, they will be more likely to "see" the bus and stop when the red lights are flashing.

In North Carolina, the Department of Crime Control and Public Safety, in partnership with the Department of Public Instruction (DPI), has established "Operation Stop Arm" to crack down on violations.

According to Derek Graham, section chief of transportation services for DPI, the North Carolina State Highway Patrol has been working to reduce traffic violations around school buses during Operation Stop Arm for the past several years.

"It was precipitated when on a single day in two different counties, we had three students struck by passing motorists," Graham says. There were no fatalities, but law enforcement agencies were prompted to take action.

The departments hold a joint press conference to kick off the safety-themed week and to raise public awareness about the problem of illegal passing. Then, throughout the week, state troopers follow bus routes in marked and unmarked units to catch motorists in the act of running school bus stop signs.

According to bus driver surveys collected by DPI, approximately 2,300 vehicles a day drive by school buses displaying the red flashing lights and stop sign. North Carolina experienced six student fatalities during the period of 1999 to 2004. In 2007, troopers followed 1,260 buses and rode along on 23 buses during Operation Stop Arm, resulting in 17 tickets issued to motorists for passing a stopped school bus.

DPI also maintains a school bus safety Website at www.ncbussafety.org that provides links to statistics tracking stop arm violations in the state, articles from the media covering the issue, data collection forms for bus drivers to

use in reporting stop arm violations, and other resources.

National School Bus Safety Week — held each year during the third week of October — can also be a good time for communities to hold awareness events and publish notices in local newspapers to reach out to the public.

"Unfortunately, it doesn't always get to all the people it needs to get to because there are just so many people on the road," Kinney says. "It's just like all the other traffic situations we have. Even now we have cameras that take your picture at the light-controlled signals, but that doesn't stop people."

Training for bus drivers and passengers

With such a high level of risk from passing motorists, responsibility for protecting children during loading and unloading also lies with the school bus driver.

The state of New York requires drivers to learn a universal crossing signal that notifies children when it's safe to cross the street. Jim Ellis, transportation director at Moravia (N.Y.) Central School District, helped create a guide to bus stop safety (available online at www.emsc.nysed.gov/schoolbus; click on "SBSIOBSAAT") that details safe crossing procedures. Training drivers to be aware of traffic conditions around the bus and to maintain eye contact with students waiting to cross is critical to ensuring their safety. Similarly, students also need to be trained to watch for the bus driver's signal, and to be aware of oncoming traffic during loading and unloading.

Many pupil transportation officials from California are proponents of the state's requirement that school bus drivers escort elementary students who need to cross the street before boarding or after disembarking the bus. Officials from other states sometimes contend that this practice conflicts with laws prohibiting the driver from exiting the bus while students are on board.

Kinney, who is a former director of pupil transportation for the California Department of Education and past president of the California Association of School Transportation Officials and the National Association of State Directors of Pupil Transportation Services, says the driver-escorted crossing policy has saved countless lives since it was adopted in the state in 1953. "If you look at all the equipment and lights and the bells and the whistles that are put on those buses, none of those has stopped people from running the red lights, nor do I think they will," he explains. "The driver, like a crossing guard, during the escort ensures that a safety zone is there for the children to cross the street."

Partnering with law enforcement

Some municipalities require that the driver of the vehicle be identified in order to prosecute a stop arm violation. School bus drivers have been able to note the license plate number of the vehicle in many cases, identifying the owner of the vehicle, but getting a description of the driver is far more difficult, especially while behind the wheel of a school bus full of children.

Some school districts work with their city attorneys to enact an ordinance allowing violations to be prosecuted based on the reported license plate numbers. "They find the registered owner and mail the owner a notice to appear," Bluthardt explains. However, "Some cities won't allow it, because they need to identify the driver of the suspect vehicle. But bus drivers are watching the students get on and off, who's sitting down, who's fighting on the bus and the other motorists around. And now you want them to see what color of hair that person has? It's ridiculous."

Bluthardt advises transportation directors that if they still face high numbers of stop arm violations after making an outreach effort to the public, they should invite the local chief of police or county sheriff to the next school board meeting. "Have the members of the board and some of the bus drivers who are having this ongoing problem address the issue to the chief of police or county sheriff or both, and let them see the statistics."

Bluthardt suggests that schools work with law enforcement to have officers watch the routes where the most infractions occur. Having an officer ride on the school bus and radio a unit parked nearby when an illegal pass is made is another effective way to catch motorists. Because police are practiced in reporting vehicles when a traffic violation occurs, they will be able to quickly identify and communicate the necessary information. If officers are

present on certain routes for a week, or on unannounced days, the word starts to spread to the motoring public, Bluthardt says. "When they start doing the fine and court cost — and not only that, they're being detained when they're already late to work — that really seems to hurt."

Kinney points out that drivers seem to go off autopilot when cops are out on the roads. "They seem to always come back to reality when there is a law enforcement car in the area," he says. "Their mind is not wandering off about what they're going to do at the store when they get there and go shopping."

At Clay Community Schools in Brazil, Ind., Director of Transportation Frank Misner says his drivers were getting frustrated with frequent stop arm violations, so he asked the police to get involved. For more than 10 years, Misner has been training drivers to contact the dispatcher with the license plate numbers of motorists who pass their buses illegally. "The police monitor our frequency, and if they are in the area, they will catch them on the spot," he says. The dispatcher then notifies the local prosecutor, who contacts the owner of the vehicle.

Misner recommends that other districts get in touch with local law enforcement to work together in a similar manner. "Several of our local, county and state police have relatives that drive for us, so it was easy to get them involved," he explains. As a result, Misner says that the number of violations has decreased. "You will still have people who are in a hurry or not paying attention, but for the most part, [violations] are down."

{+PAGEBREAK+} **Devices and equipment**

Many companies and individuals involved in school bus security and video recording technology have begun engineering products to help prevent stop arm violations or to help law enforcement prosecute motorists who pass the school bus illegally.

The AlertStar system focuses on three areas of concern with regard to school bus safety: illegal passing, onboard incidents, and loading and unloading. The system includes exterior-mounted cameras to capture vehicle information of motorists who pass the bus illegally, an interior camera system to monitor onboard activities, and a system of LED lights and audible signals outside the bus to warn children to stay out of the danger zone during loading and unloading.

According to AlertStar Corp. Chairman Brian Wesley, the system can be customized to accommodate the needs of different school bus operations. In addition, AlertStar has been refining the system during a testing project at Mesa (Ariz.) Public Schools (MPS). "Our tests have resulted in a number of improvements to our system, and we are now moving to our final phase that includes installation on 10 MPS buses," Wesley says.

He reports that in a 23-day period, a single bus experienced 104 violations, or an average of 4.5 violations per day. "That was 104 times in one month when children were unnecessarily and negligently put at risk," Wesley says.

Cameras mounted on both sides of the bus photograph the driver and license plate of vehicles that pass the school bus illegally, whether they approach from the front or rear of the bus and then attempt to pass on either the left or right side. The photos are then sent to AlertStar's processing center, matched with motor vehicle registration information and forwarded to the local police department, much like stop light camera photos that are also subcontracted to third party processors. "We have trained, certified people that do the first step in the processing, but the final decision is always made by the appropriate law enforcement agency in the community," Wesley explains.

In order to make the AlertStar system more affordable for school districts, revenue generated by paid citations is shared with the school to pay for and maintain the systems installed on each bus.

After the MPS testing project is complete, AlertStar plans to make the system available to other school districts beginning in 2009. "We already have six other communities that have indicated a real interest, so that's our objective," Wesley says.

As reported in *SBF's* November 2007 issue, Charles Bennett has designed a red flag that extends from the school bus' stop sign and hangs in the path of passing traffic. A year later, Bennett's device has attracted the attention of lawmakers in Louisiana.

State Rep. Jane Smith introduced a resolution asking the Louisiana Department of Education to conduct a study of devices and methods that could prevent illegal passing of school buses, including Bennett's flag. The resolution passed both houses over the summer, Bennett reports, and he is waiting to hear from Department of Education officials about the study. After the study is completed, the department will issue a proposal to the Legislature as to what devices or methods should be required at school bus operations.

In designing and testing the flag, Bennett installed it on about 10 buses at Bossier Parish (La.) Schools, where he served as transportation director. After retiring, he redesigned the flag to improve the extension mechanism.

"It did work — it stopped traffic," Bennett says. "Cars would turn around and follow the bus and apologize for running, when they did — it would scare them to death. A red flag just automatically means stop or pay attention. And this is something they're not used to seeing."

In Kansas, some school districts have installed white strobes that are constantly illuminated, Bluthardt says. Despite some complaints from the public over the brightness of the lights, one of the districts had a major reduction in stop arm violations. "It was like something just lit up with drivers that said, 'Stay away,'" he says. "Whatever the case may be, it worked."

Legislative support

Every state has school bus traffic violation laws on the books, but in recent years, many legislators have begun to introduce laws making penalties harsher or streamlining methods of reporting violators.

In Arkansas, state Sen. Kim Hendren introduced Act 718 of 2007, which allowed school authorities to report violations to the local prosecutor. But due to low reporting rates, Hendren plans to introduce amended language or a separate law to increase the number of violations that are reported and end up being prosecuted, and to improve overall school bus safety.

Hendren hopes to link some funding to enforcement of the laws prohibiting stop arm violations. He would also like to make it possible for motorists on the road to call 911 when they see another driver make an illegal pass. The proposed legislation would also include a requirement that all school buses have notices on the back instructing motorists to stop when the red lights are flashing, Hendren explains.

"Local prosecutors and sheriffs need to be held accountable to the public," Hendren says. "I continue to believe that the owner of the vehicle should be held responsible. This would eliminate this question of who was driving."

Hendren reports that the Huntsville (Ark.) School District has installed cameras to monitor illegal passers and legislators are learning about the costs associated with the equipment based on the experiences in Huntsville. "Advances in technology are making this tool more practical, and I hope we could get some taxpayer funds for this program," Hendren says.

In Rhode Island, both houses of the General Assembly recently passed legislation — the School Bus Safety Enforcement Act — authorizing schools to operate real-time, digital video camera systems to detect and monitor school bus law traffic violations. Under the law, schools will contract with private companies to install and maintain live video camera systems for the principal purpose of catching stop arm violators. Vendors will be reimbursed with revenue generated from paid tickets, receiving 75 percent of the funds. The remaining 25 percent is split evenly between the state's general fund and the municipality in which the violation occurred.

School buses in the state will have signs indicating the use of monitoring systems, and violators receive a \$300 fine and license suspension for up to 30 days.

SmartBus Live, a company producing live-feed digital video systems out of Providence, R.I., has begun installing cameras on school buses around the state. The live video feed is monitored by an attendant stationed at a central monitoring office, who marks places in the feed that show a vehicle passing the school bus illegally. The license plate numbers are then recorded and submitted to local law enforcement for ticketing.

Over the past 37 years, 1,151 deaths of schoolchildren have occurred during bus loading and unloading. Of those, 441 (38 percent) have been caused by a vehicle passing the bus illegally. In the 2006-07 school year, 57 percent of fatalities were caused by a vehicle passing the bus illegally.

Source: National School Bus Loading & Unloading Survey 2006-2007, Kansas State Department of Education

A comprehensive resource

The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration's "Best Practices Guide: Reducing Illegal Passing of School Buses" is available online at <http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/buses/2000schoolbus/index.htm>. The guide contains detailed information about the problem of illegal passing, including statistics from across the U.S., as well as descriptions of successful programs initiated by school districts and law enforcement agencies. The Website also lists resources for districts looking to start their own program to reduce illegal passing.

Case Study: New York assesses violation rates, warns motorists with license plate reader

Earlier this year, the New York Association for Pupil Transportation (NYAPT) launched a pilot program with Syracuse (N.Y.) City School District (SCSD) to equip a school bus with a license plate reader that would capture vehicle information of motorists who pass the bus illegally.

Funding for the project was provided by a grant from the Governor's Traffic Safety Committee and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration.

The pilot was held in conjunction with the state's Operation Safe Stop Day, when law enforcement agencies across the state partner with school districts to catch stop arm violations. After this year's event on April 2, police in 41 participating counties reported 1,171 violations. The license plate reader was unveiled at a media event that day and was installed on an SCSD school bus through June, for a total of two and a half months.

"The media in Syracuse was incredible covering what was going on with that bus so it was getting out to the public all the time," SCSD Transportation Director Patricia Bailey says. "We had press conferences every other week, and the media was there, reporting back on what's going on and how serious [the problem] is."

The reader, known as the Mobile Plate Hunter (or MPH-900) is manufactured by ELSAG North America in Greensboro, N.C. The automatic license plate recognition technology is activated when the school bus' stop arm is out and red lights are flashing, and it only records information for vehicles that make an illegal pass, either approaching the vehicle from the front or behind, according to Luci Sheehan, the company's vice president of federal operations. "The police department gets a report with a picture of the plate, the time and date, and GPS coordinates of the incident," she explains.

NYAPT Executive Director Peter Mannella said in a podcast with ELSAG's parent company, Finmeccanica, that the association had estimated stop arm violations to be at about 50,000 per day across the state before the pilot program. After the program was completed, the number of reported violations put that estimate at closer to 80,000 per day. "We ran the bus for 41 days and had 68 illegal passes, which is just over one and a half a day," Mannella said.

In New York, law enforcement officials need the license plate number, make and model of the vehicle, and a general description of the driver in order to prosecute a stop arm violation. Police in the state had been using ELSAG technology for other purposes. "We engineered it a little bit differently for the school bus," Sheehan says. The camera uses an infrared beam to detect the passing vehicle when the school bus' stop arm is activated.

NYAPT applied for a grant to address the problem of stop arm violations, motivated by the frustration of not being able to successfully prosecute violations due to a lack of necessary evidence. "We can't ask the drivers to get all this information," Mannella said. The license plate recognition technology being used by law enforcement was identified as a potential solution.

The school bus equipped with the Mobile Plate Hunter drove a different route each week to help assess traffic patterns in different areas of the city. Although the number of violations remains high, Bailey says her drivers have noticed motorists being more careful around school buses. "Passing was more prominent on streets that had several lanes instead of just one," she explains. "People are just busy, and they're not paying attention. It's gotten a little bit better, though, I have to say."

"I think they were very smart in moving it around to get different behavior on different routes," Sheehan says. "I can see some routes where you would want [the equipment] all the time, and other routes where it's less of a problem where an occasional enforcement action might make sense."

Bailey believes that equipping about a tenth of a school district's fleet with cameras would balance route coverage with the high expenses associated with the technology. Then, she says, "Those buses go all throughout the area, people see them, the word gets out that people are getting tickets from these buses with cameras, and they just never know which ones have them."

To listen to the full 15-minute interview with New York Association for Pupil Transportation Executive Director Peter Mannella discussing the Syracuse City Schools license plate reader pilot project, visit <http://www.elsagna.com/news.asp>.

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Study Shows Illegal Passing of Stopped School Buses a Serious Problem in Florida: Need for Improved Information, Enforcement Policies Recommended

Parents in Florida have long fretted that publicly-operated school buses without seatbelts make traveling to and from school dangerous for everyone onboard the buses. However, a study recently completed by the Center for Urban Transportation Research (CUTR) for the Florida Department of Education (DOE) shows that a potentially greater danger to public school children is private motorists who do not stop for stopped school buses. In winter 1994, two children were fatally injured when struck by private motorists who ran the stop arms and red flashing lights of two public school buses while the school buses were properly stopped at school bus stops. According to data compiled by DOE, nine children in Florida have been killed and numerous others have been injured in loading and unloading zone accidents involving publicly-operated school buses during the past five years.

Typical School Day Survey

At the request of the Florida Department of Education (FDOE), CUTR asked all 67 school districts in Florida to participate in a one-day survey of illegal passing. School bus drivers collected information about each illegal pass, including:

- time of occurrence
- number of students at the school bus stop
- type of locale (urban or rural)
- direction of the passing vehicle (same or opposite direction of the school bus)
- side of bus passed by vehicle (left or right)
- type of passing vehicle (car or light or heavy truck)
- type of roadway on which pass occurred
- type of roadway surface (paved or unpaved)
- operation status of white roof mounted strobe light at time of pass (on or off)

Data were collected from 58 Florida school districts, representing approximately 11,150 school buses.

Survey Analysis Results

Analysis revealed that 10,590 vehicles were recorded illegally passing 3,427 stopped school buses during a typical school day by school bus drivers while driving their regular route(s). Perhaps the most surprising finding obtained from the recorded data was the number of private motorists that illegally passed stopped school buses on the loading/unloading side: nearly four percent (415) of the recorded illegal passes occurred on the door side of the stopped school buses. Other survey analysis results include:

- The majority of passes occurred when the vehicle in violation was
- Traveling in the opposite direction of the stopped school buses.
- No trend exists in the time of day in which passes occurred.
- The majority of passes occurred on two-lane roadways.
- The majority of vehicles that passed were passenger cars.
- The majority of passes occurred at school bus stops where one to five students were boarding or alighting.
- The majority of school buses passed had their white roof mounted strobe light(s) activated.
- To present the magnitude of the problem in some areas of the state,
- Table 1 contains information pertaining to the 10 school districts with the most severe illegal pass problems.

Focus Group Results and Recommendations

In addition to the survey, focus group sessions were held in three school districts (Polk, Hardee, and Seminole) to obtain the opinions of school bus drivers, parents, law enforcement officers, school district transportation staff, and other local persons regarding the possible causes of and countermeasures to the problem of illegal passes in Florida.

Results from the focus groups suggest that the high incidence of illegal passes in Florida is primarily the result of three items:

- low enforcement of Section 316.172 of the Florida Statutes (the School Bus Stop Law)
- lack of knowledge regarding school bus signalizations
- lack of knowledge of the requirements for traffic to stop on certain roadway types

School bus drivers in rural areas also attributed the high incidence of illegal passes to heavy agricultural or other commercial trucks. The fact that approximately one out of every three school buses in operation during the single day of illegal pass data collection was passed by a private motorist adds up to nearly **1.9 million** illegal passes occurring in a typical school year in Florida.

Yet, law enforcement agencies throughout the state issued a yearly average of only about 2,700 citations for illegally passing stopped school buses during the past five years. Part of the reason for the low citation rate is the fact that state law requires law enforcement officers to actually witness an illegal pass before a citation can be issued to the violator.

Recommendations

Clearly, the existing law pertaining to the illegal passing of stopped school buses should be amended to better reflect the current driving environment in Florida. Since 1969, the driving environment in Florida has changed dramatically-the addition of four-lane roadways with center two-way left turn lanes, an increase in traffic densities on certain roadway types, and an increase in the number of registered vehicles statewide.

Revisions to the statute should include empowering school bus drivers or certain other witnesses (for example, crossing guards, school bus attendants, or private motorists) to provide evidence sufficient for issuance of a citation or warning to registered vehicle owners, and providing for fines, points assessed against the driver's license, jail time, or community service hours for convicted violators. Providing for criminal charges in lieu of increased traffic fines should also be considered. Information gathered during the study indicates that 24 of the 50 states provide specific language in their statutes that empowers school bus drivers or other certain witnesses to report school bus stop law violators.

In addition to the above recommended revisions, several other recommended countermeasures should be considered. At the state level, the Florida Commissioner of Education, the Florida Legislature, and other relevant groups representing law enforcement, planning, and local school districts should work cooperatively to develop and implement practical and effective countermeasures to this problem, including:

- promotion of the awareness and need for targeted enforcement of the school bus stop law among the statewide law enforcement community,
- development and dissemination of high impact PSAs for television, radio, and newspaper markets to educate private motorists about the school bus stop law and graphically remind them of the potential consequences of violating this law,
- development and dissemination of materials by other means, including information in automobile license tag renewal notices, rental car contract signoffs, and on billboards,
- clarification of the section in the Florida Driver's Handbook that pertains to the school bus stop law,

- provision of highway signage in school bus loading and unloading zones advising traffic of the law pertaining to stopping for stopped school buses and that school buses make frequent stops in the area,
- research on the advisability of changes to School Bus Specifications by the State Board of Education or pilot testing to include higher visibility stop signal arms, lettering on rear of school buses advising motorists of stop law, or other safety items that may be proposed such as video cameras mounted on school buses to record the vehicle(s) that illegally pass,
- analysis of the Basic School Bus Driver Curriculum and development of necessary changes to standardize in more detail the school bus stop warning procedure, and identification of the best practices and development of recommendations for school districts regarding the establishment of safe school bus routes and stops.

At the local level, attempts should be made to encourage the formation of and the participation on existing Community Traffic Safety Program (CTSP) committees. Participation on these committees should include school district transportation staff and other school board representatives, local law enforcement, city and county traffic engineers, local planners, AAA, and parent-teacher organizations.

These committees should work cooperatively to develop and implement practical and effective countermeasures to this problem at the local level, including:

- implementation of school bus stop law enforcement blitzes,
- development of recommended criteria for school bus stop location,
- dissemination of materials regarding school bus stop law via training courses, displays at local community events, mass mailings in utility and cable bills and other mailouts, pedestrian and school bus rider education, and other media.

The importance of reducing or eliminating the potential of fatal and non-fatal injury to school children in the school bus loading and unloading zones should be of paramount importance in Florida and elsewhere. It should be stressed and made patently obvious to private motorists that every illegal pass of a stopped school bus is potentially life-threatening to students.

Finally, the magnitude of illegal passing of stopped school buses in Florida documented through this study represents a very serious problem that must be addressed through the cooperation of various state and local agencies and groups through the coordinated formulation and implementation of various practical countermeasures. "We are committed to taking steps to ensure the safety of our children," said Florida Commissioner of Education Frank

Brogan. "The chronic rate at which people pass stopped school buses is a sad example of misplaced priorities. Is it really worth endangering the life of a child to save sixty seconds?"

FATALITIES



McDaniel introduces 'Nathan's Law'

By David Owens, newseditor@laurelleadercall.com

January 12, 2010 11:08 am

— Monday was an emotional day for Laurel residents Andy and Lori Lowe Key as the bill named in memory of their son came to fruition in the state's capital.

State Sen. Chris McDaniel (R-Ellisville) introduced the legislation, named "Nathan's Law," during a special press conference Monday along with the Keys and Lt. Gov. Phil Bryant.

"Nathan's Law" is named in memory of 5-year-old Nathan Key, who died in December when, upon exiting a school bus, he was hit by a car whose driver decided to go around the parked bus.

McDaniel said he introduced "Nathan's Law" as a means to tighten school bus safety and penalize those who break the law.

"The bill has widespread support in the Senate and I look forward to introducing the bill either late this afternoon or tomorrow morning," McDaniel said by phone Monday. "I anticipate it clearing the committee and receiving a full vote on the Senate floor."

In a press release issued by the Lt. Governor's Office, McDaniel said, "Nathan's life was a dream of possibilities. His death represents the loss of some small part of our collective future, as well as the death of one of our most vulnerable and dependent. It is my hope that 'Nathan's Law' makes a significant impact across the state by fostering a safer environment for Mississippi's children. Something positive must come from this terrible tragedy." Lori Key, Nathan's mother, added, "No other family should have to suffer from what we have experienced. For the sake and safety of other children, I pray the Mississippi legislature passes 'Nathan's Law' to help prevent this type of event from ever happening again."

In proposing the legislation, McDaniel said he wanted to ensure that harsher penalties would deter a similar event from occurring, but he noted that he also wants to include an educational component into the bill.

"Nathan's Law" increases current fines for a driver passing a stopped school bus while children are present from \$200 to \$500 to mandatory sanctions of \$500 to \$5,000. The new law also includes the driver's license being suspended for 30 days and up to a year in jail for the first offense.

According to the bill, a violation resulting in the death or injury of a child would be considered a felony and carry with it a prison sentence of up to five years and fines up to \$5,000.

"The penalties must be more harsh and will actually graduate upwards on subsequent offenses," McDaniel said.

"You need a deterrent effect on any law that you pass, but we also have to educate the state's population as to that law so they'll know the severity of the penalties."

Other requirements in the proposed law include:

- Creating a 30-foot buffer zone when a school bus is stopped with its stop sign extended and lights flashing
- Creating a graduated penalty framework, providing enhanced penalties for subsequent violations
- Prohibiting the use of a wireless communication device while operating a motor vehicle within a school crossing zone unless the vehicle is stopped or the wireless communication device is used with hands-free accessories
- Prohibiting school bus drivers from using wireless communication devices while driving
- Requesting the State Department of Education to develop and issue curriculum guidelines to school districts relating to the implementation of a school bus safety curriculum in grades kindergarten through 3
- Requiring that every written examination given to anyone applying for an operator's license or temporary driving permit shall ensure adequate knowledge on the part of the applicant as to school bus safety requirements
- Encouraging the State of Mississippi to conduct a statewide marketing campaign to educate our citizens concerning the new law and the importance of school bus safety
- Authorizing school districts to mount cameras on school bus stop arms for the purpose of providing admissible

evidence in a court of law concerning drivers who pass a stopped school bus

- Creating a School Bus Safety Task Force to study, research and develop new recommendations relating to school bus safety, including a detailed investigation into new school bus safety designs and technology related to safety and law enforcement

McDaniel again stated the support that "Nathan's Law" carries with state officials, most notably Bryant.

In the release, Bryant said, "No parent should lose a child in a senseless tragedy like this. An outright disregard for a school child's life should not go unpunished. 'Nathan's Law' makes it an automatic felony for anyone convicted under this statute when an injury or death occurs. I want to send a loud and clear message that this type of behavior will not be tolerated in Mississippi."

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Photos



Flanked by (from left) Lori and Andy Key, Mississippi House members Tommy King and Billy Hudson and Lt. Gov. Phil Bryant, State Senator Chris McDaniel announces Monday at the State Capital legislation he plans to introduce entitled Nathan's Law to toughen penalties for those who pass stopped school buses in Mississippi.

Opinion Finding Meaning — and a Cause — in Our Son's Death

(Jan. 22) — On a cold Friday afternoon, Dec. 11, 2009, my life was forever changed.

The day started like any other, as we got our family up and each of our children to school. The afternoon rolled around, and I waited, as I did every school day, for my precious 5-year-old son, Nathaniel Glenn Key, to hop off the bus and come happily home.

Courtesy of Lori Key

Nathan Key was killed as he was getting off his school bus by a driver who decided to pass the stopped bus.

But that day, a driver decided to recklessly pass and ignore the school bus' flashing red lights and stop sign and drive around it.

He hit and killed Nathan, just a few feet from our house, just days before Christmas.

The pain my husband and I have experienced is unbelievable and seemingly unendurable. Our memories of him are too few. I would give anything just to have him back in my life, if only for a moment.

But we have endured, barely.

In the natural course of events, life develops a cycle of normalcy. As part of life's cycle, belabored justifications of death are occasionally used for comfort when we lose our elderly friends or family, but such subtle consolation does not easily extend to the death of a child. The old expect to die and leave their children behind, and we were no different.

For us, the world has become a much darker place, with dimly lit mornings that seem less smiling. In our small community, aching emptiness abounds, and sympathetic hearts blindly search for an answer to perhaps the most difficult of life's questions.

It has now become the goal of my family

— our obsession — to make sure this type of accident never happens again. No other family should have to suffer from what we have experienced.

And though I'm painfully aware that no law can prevent each and every accident, I am dedicated to making sure that something positive comes from Nathan's death.

What we have learned since has been deeply troubling. Every school day, thousands upon thousands of cars drive around stopped school buses. In Virginia alone it happens about 600,000 times a year, according to one study. A New York study found that 50,000 times a day drivers didn't stop for a school bus that was letting children on or off.

As a result, 18 children — most of them under age 8 — were killed last school year while getting on or off a school bus, according to a national survey by the Kansas State Department of Education.

One of the big problems is that in many states the penalty for failing to stop for a school bus is weak and enforcement is lax. In my home state of Mississippi, a violator faces only a small fine — in the rare event that he or she is caught red-handed.

Courtesy of Lori Key

This makeshift memorial to Nathan stands on the side of the road where he was killed.

This madness has to stop.

My husband and I have been working with Mississippi Sen. Chris McDaniel to develop a comprehensive school bus safety act — called "Nathan's Law."

This law would, among other things, raise the fine for a first offense to \$500 for passing a stopped school bus, in addition to license suspension for a period of 30 days and discretionary imprisonment for up to 48 hours.

For any subsequent violation, the fine would climb to \$800, plus a 90-day license suspension and the possibility of one year in prison. A driver who injured a child while passing a stopped bus could face up to five years in jail.

The law would also encourage a statewide marketing campaign to educate our citizens concerning the new law and the importance of school bus safety. More important, it would authorize school districts to mount cameras on their stop arms to help catch lawbreakers.

This law isn't just needed in my home state. Tougher penalties and better enforcement are needed around the country.

For the sake and safety of other children, we must take action to help prevent this type of event from ever happening again.

It's my prayer that something positive will come from such a senseless tragedy. I hope that Nathan's life and death will serve to inspire safety reforms all across our country.

Perhaps then we will be able to see God's purpose, even in our heartbreak.

Lori Key lives in Laurel, Miss.

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news-record.com

Perdue signs new law for school bus death

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

By **MARK BINKER**
Staff Writer

RALEIGH — Gov. Bev Perdue signed the Nicholas Adkins School Bus Safety Act Monday afternoon, increasing the penalty for those who strike and kill someone when they run through a school bus' stop arm.

The new law, which goes into effect Dec. 1, is named for Nicholas Adkins, 16, of Stoneville, a student at McMichael High School in Mayodan. Adkins was killed in January when a driver did not stop for a school bus that had stopped and extended its stop arm.

"Parents should not have to worry that their children might be injured getting on and off the school bus," Perdue said Monday. "The Nicholas Adkins School Bus Safety Act will ensure that reckless drivers who endanger our children will be held accountable for their actions."

The measure was co-sponsored by Rep. Dale Folwell, a Winston-Salem Republican, and Nelson Cole, a Reidsville Democrat.

Under the law signed Monday, two major provisions are added:

ISchool districts will be authorized to mount cameras on their stop arms. Pictures from the cameras would be admissible as evidence in court.

IKilling someone after running a school bus stop sign will now be a Class H felony, meaning that courts are more likely to assign jail time for such incidents.

The woman who hit Adkins avoided jail time. Judy Earlene Stilwell lost her license for a year and paid a \$1,000 fine.

"I feel like it's going to make the public more aware of the consequences of something like this," said Stoneville police Chief Mike James. "The days of a slap on the hand are over with."

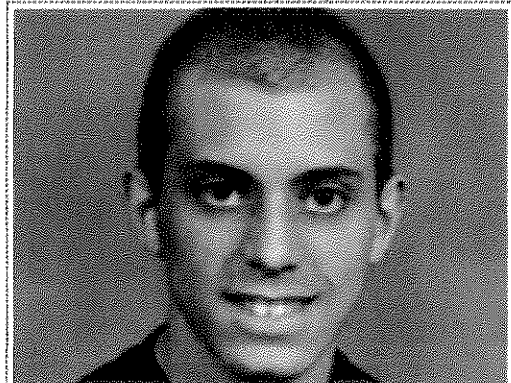
James and Stoneville's mayor made the trip to Raleigh to watch Perdue sign the bill.

According to the governor's office, Adkins' family had planned to come, but both his mother and father were too sick to travel.

"It's hard to legislate common sense and common courtesy," Folwell said after the bill signing. "We would prefer not to have to run any more of these bills."

Folwell's 7-year-old son was killed in 1999 by a driver who ignored a stop arm. He has been involved in multiple changes to the state's school bus safety law and said the Adkins bill marks the fourth such revision this decade.

Contact Mark Binker at (919) 832-5549 or mark.binker@news-record.com.



Nicholas Adkins

[Additional Photos](#)

Related Links

- [Stopped school bus bill passes Senate \(Jun. 4\)](#)
- [Woman avoids jail time in fatal school bus accident \(Apr. 8\)](#)
- [Graphic: When to stop for school buses](#)
- [Capital Beat](#)

ENDORSEMENTS



RHODE ISLAND POLICE CHIEFS' ASSOCIATION

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Col. Stephen M. McCartney
Warwick Police Dept.

VICE PRESIDENT

Chief George E. Kelley III
Pawtucket Police Dept.

SECRETARY

Chief Sidney Wordell
Little Compton Police Dept.

TREASURER

Chief Jamie Hainsworth
Glocester Police Dept.

SERGEANT AT ARMS

Chief Joseph Moran
Central Falls Police Dept.

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Col. Russell S. Serpa
Bristol Police Dept.

June 3, 2008

Mr. Alfred A. Cardi, Jr.
President & General Manager
SmartBus Live
Cranston, RI 02921

Dear Mr. Cardi:

I recently had the opportunity to speak to you in regard to your school bus safety program. I feel the "SmartBus Live" system will provide increased safety for children while riding on the bus. The system also provides an exterior traffic safety component which will also create revenues to the schools and municipalities who implement the system.

Subject to the legislature approving the bill in the finance committee, I would be in support of the "SmartBus Live" school bus safety program.

Sincerely,

Col. Stephen M. McCartney
President, Rhode Island Police Chiefs' Association

SMM:sbw

DAVID N. CICILLINE
Mayor

THOMAS M. BRADY
Superintendent

Providence Schools

Providence Public School District
Office of the Superintendent
797 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903-4045
tel. 401.456.9211
fax 401. 456.9252

October 15, 2009

The Honorable Thomas M. Menino
Mayor, City of Boston
1 City Hall Square, Suite 500
Boston, MA 02201-2013

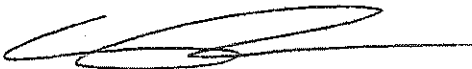
Dear Mayor Menino:

As the Chief of Staff for the Providence Public School District (PPSD) I write to strongly support our partnership with SmartBus Live. Approximately one year ago, PPCD issued an RFP seeking bids for the installation of internal and external cameras on our school buses. For the past several years we had become increasingly aware of vehicle violations against our buses that threatened the safety and wellbeing of our students and staff. Last fall we awarded the contract to SmartBus Live and have been extremely satisfied with the services they have provided to date.

With the installation of external cameras SmartBus Live, in collaboration with our police department have been able to issue traffic violations to thousands of drivers throughout the city. We have received positive feedback from our bus drivers indicating that they feel the safety of our students has greatly improved as a result of this initiative. In addition, as a result of these violations PPCD has seen a tremendous return on our investment. We anticipate that the violations issued will result in approximately \$800,000.00 in revenue for the district for FY'10. Furthermore, SmartBus Live agreed to install internal cameras on our buses that resulted in a reduction of student disturbances during transportation.

It is without question that I recommend installation of internal and external cameras on any school districts' buses. If you have any further questions or would like to discuss this initiative in greater detail please do not hesitate to contact me at (401)456-9211.

Warm Regards,



Stephanie Federico, Esq.
Chief of Staff, Providence Public School Department

July 14, 2009

RE: Smart Bus

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter of recommendation for Smart Bus. Here at First Student Inc. in Providence, RI we have had a great experience in dealing with the entire staff. They are a professional team who include you in all aspects of having cameras installed and how they work.

Their first step was taking surveys of the actual runs and riding along with the drivers, monitors and students. During this process they informed the drivers of what was being done and how the cameras actually worked. They went by our guidelines while on our property and followed procedures.

When the cameras were out during the bus runs it gave the drivers a sense of respect in knowing that one of the most dangerous parts of their trip was being dealt with and they would see results. Being in the school bus industry for a number of years this has been a difficult problem to deal with. Not many drivers would be able to continue driving if one of their students was hit and or killed by a driver who failed to stop for our red lights and stop sign. Also, having cameras inside has given drivers back up if they have serious behavior issues on their routes.

I would highly recommend working with this company it has been a pleasurable and learning experience for all involved.

Sincerely,



Sandra diSabella
Location Safety Manager

EXECUTIVE CHAMBER

CITY OF WARWICK



RHODE ISLAND

SCOTT AVEDISIAN
MAYOR

July 14, 2009

Mr. Alfred A. Cardi
President & General Manager
SmartBus Live
49 Pavilion Avenue
Second Floor
Providence, Rhode Island 02905

Dear Mr. Cardi:

I am writing to follow up on our recent meeting regarding the "SmartBus Live" safety program.

After seeing the presentation, reviewing the materials and other municipalities' experiences thus far with the program, I believe the system would provide increased safety for Warwick children who take the bus to school. In addition, it appears that the system also provides an exterior traffic management component that would create incremental revenues to the Warwick School Department.

For these reasons, I am in support of the "SmartBus Live" system for the Warwick School Department.

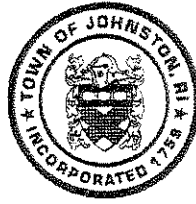
Please keep me informed of your progress.

Sincerely,

Scott Avedisian
Mayor

JOSEPH M. POLISENA
MAYOR

TEL. (401) 553-8800
FAX. (401) 331-4271



EXECUTIVE CHAMBERS

TOWN HALL
1385 HARTFORD AVENUE
JOHNSTON, RHODE ISLAND 02919

July 28, 2009

Mr. Alfred A. Cardi
President & General Manager
SmartBus Live
49 Pavilion Avenue – 2nd Floor
Providence, RI 02905

Dear Mr. Cardi:

I am writing this letter in support of the SmartBus Live safety program currently being utilized on school busses servicing the Town of Johnston School Department. It is my belief that this program has provided an increased measure of safety for children who depend on school bus transportation on a daily basis. It also assists law enforcement with the tools to cite violators who pass school busses when it is unsafe and illegal to do so.

The SmartBus live program has been well-received in this community and I would recommend it to other municipalities in an effort to enhance the safety of children.

Very truly yours,

Joseph M. Polisena
Mayor

JMP/jw

April 10, 2008

Alfred A. Cardi, Jr.
President & General Manager
Smart Bus Live
Cranston, RI 02921

Dear Mr. Cardi:

Recently we had the opportunity to meet with you with regard to your school bus safety program. After seeing the presentation and reviewing the materials, we feel that the "SmartBus Live" system will provide increased safety for children while riding on the bus. The system also provides an exterior traffic safety component which will also create additional revenues to the Schools and Municipalities who implement the system.

Subject to the legislature approving the Bill in the Finance Committee, I/we would be in support of the "SmartBus Live" school bus safety program.

Please keep me informed of your progress.



Sincerely,

Michael A. Traficante, Chairman